

Memorable Teachers at Tarkiln ✓

By PRISCILLA HARRIS

[Editor's note: This is the second and final installment of one of our reader's remembrances of the former Tarkiln School.]

Our history books had obviously been used by many students before us; their pages dog-eared and grayish, and their contents uninteresting. Miss Baker filled us in on the courage, fortitude, bravery and wisdom of the Pilgrims. Respect and admiration was emphasized for George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, especially during February when their portraits hung in our room.

Once a week our art teacher came. His name was Samuel Warner, and he always wore a full-length smock. I looked forward to the time he spent with us—and each week I brought in the drawings I had done at home. He seemed grateful for my enthusiasm, and told me to keep on drawing and one day I would go to the Massachusetts School of Art and become an artist. I didn't like being called, "teacher's pet"—but continued to take his advice.

We had different teachers in the seventh and eighth grades. One was a slim, older lady who had trouble controlling the eighth grade at times. A series of events brought about the sudden end of her stay. She, like the rest of us, ate her lunch at her desk, and every day walked down the aisle to the entryway where there was a faucet, for a glass of water. One day on her way back to her desk, a boy who was talking animatedly to a friend across the aisle made a gesture with his arm, hitting the teacher's glass of cold water, spilling most of its contents down her front. For a moment she stood stock-still, and suddenly threw what water was left in the glass at the boy—he jumped up bumping into the teacher.

Suddenly Miss Baker appeared. The boy was sent home—a three-mile walk.

We had a week off. To our surprise there was a man sitting at the teacher's desk when we got back to school. He had a pleasant expression, and seemed neither young nor old. He made history interesting. The First World War had ended eight years before—and he knew a lot about it—probably was in it.

Memorizing poetry was an important part of our English classes and we were required to recite them at various holidays. One Memorial Day we joined the rest of the Duxbury schools and took part in a program at Mattakeesett Hall. Once a veteran of the Civil War came and gave a speech. He looked as though he stepped right out of a history book.

In the winter months, depending on the weather, Mr. Snow drove a conveyance called a pung. It was like a farm wagon but had wide runners that glided over the well-packed snow on the road. We sat on bales of hay. Sometimes the bigger boys would jump off and run along beside it to keep warm. Mr. Snow would some-



Delbert Glass, Joseph Short, Mary Swift, Ben MacFarlane, Priscilla (Swanson) Harris, Frances MacFarlane, Elsie (Berg) Swanson, Unknown, Elsie Loring and Elizabeth Clark at the 1927 Tarkiln graduation.

times spread hay on the floor to help warm our feet; it never worked for me.

The basement of the school was divided into two sections, one for wood working for the boys—and cooking and sewing for the girls. To me, cooking and sewing were things that mothers did in their home—and we didn't need to learn how to do them in a school. Evidently I didn't have the proper attitude towards those subjects and would rather have been making birdhouses like the boys.

When I was in the eighth grade, a new teacher was hired for the fifth and sixth grades. She was young and pretty and we learned that she was boarding at O'Neil's farm. I recently called Carl O'Neil and asked him if he happened to know her. He gave me a quick answer: "She was my mother." He also told me he spent three years at Tarkiln—1941, '42 and '43.

In 1927, our class of twelve graduated from Tarkiln being the first class to have spent four years there. What we learned in those four years, no doubt, had little in common with what is required of students today. But, taking the long view—I can still add, subtract, multiply and divide without the aid of a calculator, and remember most of the lines in several Longfellow's and Whittier's poems. I'm especially grateful to Mr. Warner our art teacher (for twelve years, as it turned out), who started me out on the right track—for me. I remember him saying once "keep your feet in Duxbury, if you must, Priscilla, but keep your head in the clouds." I did, still do.